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She never learned to quench the fire that raged in her soul.

Many thought she never would - ever since she was a child, Fadia had been told, everyday, that weakness left her vulnerable. That she could never show weakness.

That weakness was unacceptable.

She had been taught that she was never to show any emotion that would leave her susceptible to back talk. She should never let anyone get the upper hand. She should always keep her guard up, for anyone, friend or foe, could deceive her at any moment.

Her parent's expectations laid on her shoulders like a sack of bricks that she had to bring with her wherever she went. Fadia tried desperately to make them proud, to show that she was not weak, that she was worthy of her praise. In return, she got nothing but cold shoulders and empty stares.

At school, sometimes kids her age whined that their parents wouldn't listen to them or that they wouldn't give their dear children what they wanted. This greatly annoyed Fadia - they had no idea what it was like to be ignored. To only be given what you need. To never see any other place but your home and the school courtyard. It was as if her parents didn't trust her.

Of all the lessons Fadia had been taught, of all the things she had gone through, there was one thing her parents had told her that would burden her for the rest of her life.

Anger is strength.

So, she learned to turn nearly every emotion into some form of anger or irritation. It was difficult to do, especially when she tried to suppress the sadness and defeat she felt when her parents disregarded her. Some days Fadia just wanted to quit - to just give in to the sadness that had haunted her for so many months, and the disgust at herself for not being able to do anything. Despite her doubts, Fadia never quit. She turned the sadness, disgust and anxiety she felt into a raging fire in her soul that would never go away, that would stick with her for the rest of her life.

As she became more and more obsessed with impressing her parents or being noticed in any way, her temper grew and the amount of times she snapped at others for no reason increased. At school, Fadia became feared. Her friends, whether they were sick of her constant temper tantrums or were just plain scared of her, began to distance themselves. She managed to keep her grades up and barely avoided trouble but it was hard maintaining all of this. There was no one to rant to. No one to hang out with. No one to laugh with. No one to talk with.

Fadia felt more alone than ever.

And it was all her fault.

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Years went by. While Fadia's temper never grew worse, it never went away, either. She exercised regularly and, while she believed it made her powerful and strong, sometimes she wondered whether it was worth it. While she had gotten used to wandering the halls of her school alone, every now and then the loneliness of it was more... noticeable. All the while, she was still neglected by her parents.

Then, around high school, Fadia met a boy.

And, no, this isn't some cliché love story. Fadia had given up on love years ago, and, as far as

she knew, the boy was already dating. Despite this, there was something different about him.

Something that separated him from the rest of the students.

Kais didn't care about Fadia's temper.

He never shunned her or tried to avoid her at all costs. In fact, he did the opposite. Daily he would walk up to her and talk with her, even if he had to deal with her endless bouts of anger. He

never seemed to mind.

That was because Kais saw what she really was.

A broken, misguided soul.

As for Kais himself, he admired Fadia for putting up a fight for so long. Having grown up in poverty, more than once he had wanted to give up. His parents, though they loved him and his siblings dearly, were never around, working until midnight to support their family. There were days when Kais was unsure of when he'd get his next meal, or if they'd no longer have running water. There were days when his brother and sister starved, and he felt responsible. Yet, Fadia had put up a fight despite being neglected. He wanted to help her work her way out of her bad habits, to let her know it was okay to show weakness. That it was okay to rely on others or to show an emotion other than anger.

And that's exactly what he did.

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"Fadia."

"What?"

"You know... It's okay to let it out."

"... What?"

“It’s okay to cry. You’ve bottled it up for a long time, haven’t you?”

“... B-Bottled up what...?”

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Those words, though they were nothing more than a faded echo in her mind, would stick with her forever. Just as her anger would always follow her, no matter how much help she received. At every therapy session she attended, group or individual, she always remembered those words. They let her know that it was okay to show emotion - even if she didn’t entirely believe them herself.

Therapy was nice and all, but Kais was probably the one who influenced her the most.

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“There were days when I wanted to cry, and scream, and shout about how unfair the world was... But I couldn’t. I had to keep my composure in front of my brother and sister. I’m telling you this, Fadia, because I know what you’ve been through.”

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With time, a *lot* of time, past her graduation and acceptance into college, she learned to accept that it was completely human to express emotion and show weakness. She would have to lean on someone else’s shoulder every now and then. While her parents weren’t very happy about this new change in her attitude, Fadia pushed down the urge to try and impress them when she knew she never would. Her family was never, and would never, be reliable.

Time continued on. The raging fire in her soul, though it was still there, had become a peaceful pond, disturbed only by faint tremors in the ground.

She had transformed into a different person, a shadow of her previous self.

And it was all thanks to him.